622 The command carries, moreover, a certain number of fixed offices. It is the chief who makes the poison for arrows; and he presides over ceremonies of initiation, of marriage or burial, concerning which we shall speak later. He organizes chants and dances, festivals both when they assume a ritual character, and when they have as a goal purely secular distraction. It is he who organizes 622 526 ball games. The ball game is widespread in western and northern Mato Grosso, for it is found from the Paressi to the tribes of the Lower Guaporé. Among the latter people we have been able to gather evidences of its sociological significance. It is perhaps the same among the Nambikwara; but, at least during the period of nomadic life, the ball game is practiced with a purely recreational goal in mind. The teams are built up haphazardly from those present and upon the spur of the moment, and the game takes place in a spirit of complete improvisation.

WAR AND TRADE

648 The two subjects should be treated simultaneously, commercial 609 exchanges usually representing potential wars peacefully re-[91] 439 solved, and the wars, the outcome of unhappy transactions. Among the numerous bands which cross through the bush during the dry season, it is necessary to distinguish those who are related by family ties, and who often represent the population of a winter village—or of a group of villages—which has "burst forth" in the pursuit of the nomadic life. Among themselves these bands entertain relationships which are normally pacific, although not necessarily so. On the contrary, bands which are strangers to one another, composed of members not related among themselves and whose geographic location is far distant, or who are even separated by differences of language, mistrust one another at the same time that they feel themselves necessary to one another. Only when they meet can they procure desirable articles which only one of them is capable of obtaining or of making. These articles seemed to us to belong essentially to three categories: first of all women, whom only victorious expeditions are permitted to carry off. Next seeds, notably bean seeds, and finally ceramics, or [283] even fragments of pottery used to make the weights of spindles. Group [84] a1 whose cultural level is clearly inferior (especially in its ignorance concerning pottery) to that of its western and southern neighbors, according to the word of its chief, had carried on several campaigns during the last few years with the goal of procuring these two last articles.

2: Lévi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939)1948
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

and dots hanging down from the nape of the neck. A similar but shorter headdress may be worn in daily life.

Hair is groomed with a composite comb. It is cut with a shell, either all around the head at the level of the ear lobe, or only across the forehead, the back and sides being allowed to fall loose. Body painting consists mainly of urucú smeared uniformly, but some groups roughly trace black dots and stripes with genipa juice on the chest and legs. Face and body hair is generally pulled out, especially by women; men often have a sparse moustache and beard.

TRANSPORTATION

Canoes are unknown. Small waterways are crossed on a fallen tree; large ones by swimming, sometimes with the help of large floating bundles of buriti palm stems. Babies straddle their mother's hip supported by a large sling of bark or woven cotton.

MANUFACTURES

Spinning.—Women spin cotton with a crude drop spindle made of grass stalk. The whorl is a wild fruit, a potsherd, or a conical piece of sun-dried clay. Cotton thread is rolled in a ball and, like everything else in a *Nambicuara* household, wrapped in leaves. Women and men twist tucum and buriti fibers on their thighs to make string.

Weaving.—Weaving is limited to cotton bands and belts which men make on small, rough looms of the *"Arawak"* type (pl. 37, *center, right*).

Basketry.—Men make long, open-mouthed, cylindrical baskets using bamboo strips and a hexagonal, open weave. Fire fans are plaited of palm leaves. The *Northern Nambicuara* used palm leaves to weave low square baskets for storing the manioc and maize flour.

Pottery.—Pottery is unknown among the *Eastern Nambicuara*. In other groups, women make coarse pots of varying sizes. They mix the clay with ashes, fire the pot in the open, and wash it while it is still hot in an infusion of resinous bark.

Implements.—Stone ax heads were formerly fixed with wax and strings in the loop of a bent handle. Knives and drills are made of a crude flint chip or piece of iron fastened with wax and thread at the end of a piece of wood or between two pieces of wood, which form the handle. Women hollow small cylindrical mortars in tree trunks by means of fire. Fire is made with a fire drill, crude rubber serving as tinder. The Indians burn almecega (*Tetragastris balsamifera*) resin for light. Knives are thin, sharp-edged pieces of wood.

Weapons.—The *Nambicuara* bow is about 5 to 7 feet (2 m.) long, the section being flat, semicircular, or concave according to the group. The grip is wrapped with cotton. The arrow is released between the thumb and the first finger, the three other fingers being placed on the

4: Oberg E-5 (1949)1953
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

subsistence activities. For instance, they say that they eat the blossoms of certain plants and a great number of grubs, larvae, and insects. A favorite dish is to crush in a mortar manioc cakes with boiled beans, broiled meat, ants, palm nuts, monkey and bird bones.

As an example of the variety of uses to which the Nambicuara can put a plant we can take the buritĭ palm: (1) They eat the pulp surrounding the scaly covered nut. (2) They use the fibers from the new growth to make twine. (3) They use the tough, flexible cortex of the frond stalk for making baskets. (4) They fell the buritĭ so that a certain variety of grub can collect and multiply in the starchy pith in the heart of the tree. The grubs or larvae they then eat uncooked. (5) The dried frond stalks are tied into bundles and used as floats for crossing rivers. In addition, the buritĭ palm has male associations, for only men can prepare its products. When a male child dies a piece of buritĭ fiber is left over his grave.

The Nambicuara make fire by the drill method. They cut two round pieces of dry stick about 18 inches in length and three-quarters of an inch in diameter from some bush that has a soft pithy center. The lower stick is split and into the flat side shallow notches are cut to hold the drill in place. The drilling stick is then inserted into the notch while the lower stick is held in place by the toes of the man as he squats over it. He then begins to twirl the stick between his palms, pressing downward. As his hands reach the bottom, he quickly brings them to the top and continues drilling until the pith in the lower stick loosens into small smouldering balls. These he places into a handful of dry buritĭ fiber and begins to blow on them until the fiber ignites. About 2 minutes is all that is required to make a fire by this method.

MANUFACTURING

The material equipment of the Eastern Nambicuara is extremely simple. Many items, such as the conical trap for catching fish, the floats for crossing rivers, the loom for weaving arm bands, and the mortar and pestle for crushing food products are made for the occasion and are discarded when the task is completed or when the people move. The small grater and the few gourd vessels, small baskets, and twine, the woman carries

[p. 92(B)]

411 thickness in the middle. This bow is made from the honey-colored heartwood of a small piuva tree. After cutting a piece of the required length the bow maker splits it by using two or three axes. He then trims off the outer layer of wood with an ax, shapes it with a knife, and polishes it with lixeiro leaves. The inner side of the bow is flat or slightly concave, depending upon how the wood splits. Shoulders are made at each end to hold the bowstring. The bow is made from green wood, no attempt being made to season it. The siriva bow is the same shape and is made in the same way but [184] the black wood surrounding the center is used. The siriva bow is more common among the Western Nambicuara.

● [283] The bowstring (*kalunwinisu*) is made from tucum fiber and is about one-eighth of an inch in thickness. The cord is much longer than required and the extra length is wound around the bow for about 6 inches just above the hand hold. The cord is wound from left to right, the running end being brought back over the previous turn to form a cross on the inside of the bow. The string is always smeared with urucú (*dúse*). As the bowstring wears out it is not removed but new lengths of tucum fiber are woven into the extra length.

The basis of the Eastern Nambicuara arrow is the jointless shaft (*alukwirikatu*), which appears to be cane (*Gadua* sp.). Before being made into an arrow the cane shaft is heated over a fire to harden it. Into this cane shaft, which is roughly three-eighths of an inch in diameter, a piuva foreshaft (*ihdikatsutu*) is inserted for a distance of 4 or 5 inches, leaving about 20 inches protruding. The joint is wound with sipó vine for about [237] 6 inches. To feather the arrow, a 10-inch macaw feather (*akinéntsu*) is split and the halves are laid parallel to one another on opposite sides of the [284] butt end of the shaft. The feathers are lashed to the shaft with cotton twine, the lashings being about an inch apart. Although the feathers are laid straight along the shaft, they assume a propellerlike pitch which gives the arrow its revolving [237] motion when in flight. The lashings are covered with beeswax. The butt has a V-notch to hold [284] the bowstring, which is again tightly wound with waxed cotton twine. By attaching various parts to the end of the foreshaft, four different kinds of arrows about 5 feet long are made.

[p. 93(2)]

411 (1) The *hányesu*, an arrow which is used for [223 224] shooting monkeys and large birds, is made by lashing an inch-long slender barb of siriva palm or piuva about an inch back from the sharpened point of the foreshaft.

[227] (2) The *saldítsu*, or fish arrow, is made by lashing four slender points of wood about 2 inches long to the end of the foreshaft. This arrow need not be feathered. Today wire is sometimes substituted for the wooden points.

[223] (3) The *dúnkisu*, or blunt bird arrow, used for shooting small birds, has a separate piuva foreshaft, the end of which forms a rounded flat surface about an inch in diameter.

[224] (4) The *hóptisu*, or big game arrow, has a broad split bamboo point about 12 inches in length which is lashed to the foreshaft. As the bamboo point is slightly grooved along the center, the foreshaft lies along the groove permitting it to be lashed firmly to the tapered sides of the point. Formerly curare poison was smeared along the groove. This was also the arrow used in war.

Sometimes a bamboo point is serrated on one or both sides. In former times, this arrowhead was poisoned with curare. It was attached loosely to the shaft so that when it struck an animal it became detached from the shaft. This arrow was used against big game like the jaguar, tapir, deer, and against human enemies.

The bow is held in a vertical position when shooting; the arrow is held with the thumb and forefinger while the middle and ring finger pull the bowstring, with the arrow resting against the hand side of the bow.

● 283 Cordage is made from the fibers of the tucum and buriti palms and from cotton. The tucum palm (*Astrocaryum tucuma*), *hatdtsu*, provides not [306] only fiber but the hard shell of the nut is used for making the black, round, flat necklace washers, [252] and the thorns from the trunk are used as spikes in the manioc grater. Tucum twine which is a little stronger than buriti twine is used for bowstrings, for stringing beads, and for many other purposes. When a man needs tucum twine he sends his wife to gather the palm leaves. As the young trees grow in clumps, it is a simple matter for the woman to cut off a number of fronds. The woman then takes a long slender leaf, bends it double in the middle so that the woody fiber breaks, then doubles it back and pulls downward

283 on one half while holding the other, thus stripping the fine fiber from the body of the leaf. She then turns the leaf over and strips the other half. Later she picks off whatever bits of green skin that adheres to the fibers and twirls one end between her fingers to keep the fibers together. From each leaf, therefore, she gets a pale green whip of fiber which forms the raw material for cordage making. A number of these whips are wrapped in embira, the bundle being known as *dáidjusu*, and stored away for future use.

When a man wishes to make cordage he begins to add these whips to existing bits of twine or cord. I never saw a man making a completely new cord. The end of an old piece of cordage is unraveled and three whips are joined to it at intervals of several inches and rolled together on the thigh, the motion being toward the body. This stroke rolls up the fibers into three tight strands. On the downward stroke the three separate strands are "laid up" or rolled together to form the cord. Three new whips are added and the process is repeated until the cord is of the desired length. If the man wishes to make finer cord he separates each whip into a number of parts.

The making of cordage from buriti (*Mauritia vinifera*), *yélasu*, as has been mentioned, is man's work. The man finds a young buriti palm and from the top of it cuts down the shoot which encloses the three leafstalks. This growing part is a tapered rod about 5 feet long and triangular in shape. When twisted this rod cracks open revealing countless fine strands covered with a green skin, each strand having a hard embryonic leaf stem running through the center. First the man peels off the green outer skin and then pulls out the embryonic leaf stem. What he has left is a hank of lemon-colored, soft, grasslike ribbons the length of the original rod and about one-half of an inch in width. These ribbons he coils and places in a pot and boils for about 20 minutes so that the starchy material is loosened. In former times the hank was placed in the hot sand under the fire and sprinkled with water. When the coil is cool enough to handle the man opens it out and begins to rub it between his hands just as does a woman washing a strip of cloth, periodically dipping it into the warm water. As he rubs, the hank gets quite sticky as the starchy material

283 breaks down. After one-half hour the starchy material is washed out and the ribbons begin to separate into fine strands of fiber. The hank is then shaken out and hung up to dry. When of good quality, that is, when the rod is of the right age, the fibers dry out a pale cream color. While the man is occupied at this task the girls make temporary necklaces from the green outer skin and the boys use the thin central stems as arrows for their small bows. These dried-out hanks are [301] a favorite decoration of the Nambicuara when painted with horizontal bands of urucú. They can then be suspended from the neck and allowed to hang down the back, or pieces are attached to the arm bands, leg bands, and in front to the belt.

Cotton twine is used for making arrows, stringing beads, weaving arm bands and the narrow shoulder straps which women use for carrying young children. From the cotton bush (*kúndzu*) the woman picks the bolls (*kúnkisu*) to make cotton twine (*kúnálisu*). As the making of buriti twine is a man's task, so the making of cotton twine is purely a woman's task. After picking the seeds from the bolls she spreads the cotton into flat disks and then into circles. Next she breaks the circles and joins them to form a long rope about an inch in diameter. This rope she winds around her arm, twists the end of it with her fingers, and fastens it to the top of a spindle (*wanikisu*). With a twirl of her fingers she sets it spinning and lets it drop, plucking out the cotton as it is spun. Later she unties the string and fastens it near the whorl and then by spinning the spindle on the ground the twine is wrapped around it. This process is repeated until the cotton rope is used up.

286 The men do the weaving on a true but very makeshift loom. Two forked sticks, roughly a yard long, are thrust into the ground about 2 feet apart and at an angle. One cross bar rests in the forks while another is fastened on near the ground. The warp is wound around these cross bars. The heddle, shuttle, and sword are used in [177] weaving the narrow material. It seems very likely that this type of loom was taken over from the Arawakan Paressí.

The bast strap or band (*sa'am*) is made from embira and is used for pressing manioc pulp, for carrying children or baskets, and, when cut into strips, is used for tying up bundles.

[p. 95 (A)]

342 provided with a fairly large doorway; it could easily hold some twenty people. The other had the shape of a triangular prism, with one of its [lateral] faces to the ground. It was more carefully constructed, and measured nine meters in length, three and a half in width and two and a half in height. One of its ends was closed; on the side, hidden by the leaves which hung from the roof, there was a small door. The other end was fully open. The hut was oriented in an east-west direction, the closed end facing the east. Thus in the afternoon the rays of the sun entered the house for a few hours.

Two forked stakes, one at each end of the building, supported the ridgepole. [222] Several beams designed to hold the huge covering leaves of the babassu palm ran from the ridgepole to the ground.

The palms which were laid on one side of the roof were folded at the top over the ridgepole onto the other side; in order to hold
[283 824] them in this position, two rods ran the length of the house, tied to the inner beams with knots of embira (1) cord.

1. A bast fiber yielded by one of the embira trees. (Ed.)

Tagnani and Tawite villages also consist of two huts. Each, with its entrance oriented in an east-west direction, is evenly circular at ground level and conical in shape. From the apex of the cone a pole rises a few spans above the roof; it is always forked at the tip, as shown in the photograph. The doorways are set on opposite sides of the building, facing each other.

We still do not know how the Nambicuara trace the circle which delimits the hut; it must be a freehand line, for that is how they draw this figure on their gourds. In the middle of the house they set up four stakes forked at the tip and a centrl support. [Fig. 16]

The forked stakes form an overhead rectangle of wood, from which flexible poles run down into the ground along the circle which delimits the house. These poles are secured and connected by horizontal rods which complete the framework of the hut. The covering consists of bacaba palm leaves arranged in layers. As seen from within the hut, the first layer consists of plaited leaflets fastened to the [223] woodwork. [Plate p. 226]

[276]

[262
824]

[283
825]

[237]

[301]

[531]

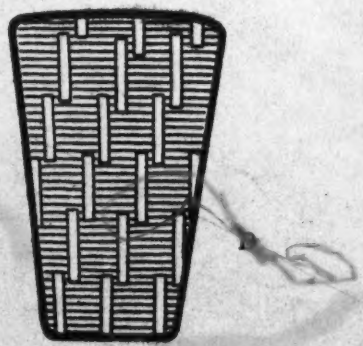
B

952

A

C

12417



A. Arezi mushroom (Poliporus sp.) eaten by the Serra do Norte Indians.

B. Cord of monkey hair (Pithecia satanas).

C. Necklace made with minute shreds of feather stems.

D. Ornamental motif of the Serra do Norte Indians.

372 They make fire with mastic resin sticks, the tips of which are wrapped in straw to protect them from the rain.

[Fig. 63]

241 415 Their plots are worked with pointed sticks. The seeds of urucu, gourd plants (Lagenaria) and cotton are kept in leaf containers.

278 824 Medicinal fruit (Solanum mammosum) is also saved, as well as roots, leaves, etc.

[Fig. 31]

386 The collection contains two samples of dyes: a paste of urucu and fat, sweetly scented, which the women use to paint their body after the bath (huduhukaidi); and a variety of red ocher. [279]

248 Cotton (1) is represented by seeds (rim de boi variety) in leaf

[171]

1. According to the studies of Fa. Schmidt and Nordenskjöld (concerning hammocks), cotton reached Brazil from the Andes and was cultivated mostly by the Tupian Indians in the midst of the Amazon jungle. It is used less extensively among the Arawakan Indians. This distribution, due in part to the needs of the plant, explains its presence among the Nambicuara, who are located at the extreme west of the plateau. (R. L.)

[283 286] containers; cotton thread (kondzú) from a spindle (gdaretatú); skeins [255] of spun cotton; cotton fabric (sareguêzê--strap used to carry children). The spindle is made of a palm splinter imbedded in a round [283] potsherd.

[Fig. 64]

415 824 Kateçú are fruits of the Lagenaria genus used as containers and storage vessels. Some hold crudely chopped tobacco and are stoppled with a corn cob, a method frequently used by the frontiersmen.

[See fig. ...(28) p. 308.]

7:Roquette-Pinto--58B E-4, 5 (no date) 1938 SP17 Nambicuara SP17
(ca. 1912)

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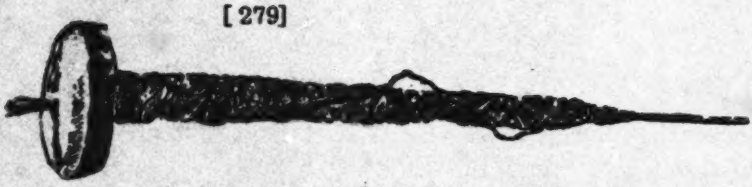

Fig. 84. Gdaretatú--Serra do Norte spindle.